

Message to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the United States-China Act of 1991

March 2, 1992

To the House of Representatives:

I am returning herewith without my approval H.R. 2212, the “United States-China Act of 1991,” which places additional conditions on renewal of China’s most-favored-nation (MFN) trade status.

The sponsors of H.R. 2212 believe they can promote broad economic and foreign policy objectives in China by placing conditions on the renewal of China’s MFN status. They expect that the Chinese will improve respect for human rights, cooperate in arms control, and drop barriers to trade, given a choice between losing MFN and addressing these concerns.

Let me state at the outset that my Administration shares the goals and objectives of H.R. 2212. Upholding the sanctity of human rights, controlling the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and free and fair trade are issues of vital concern. My objection lies strictly with the methods proposed to achieve these aims.

There is no doubt in my mind that if we present China’s leaders with an ultimatum on MFN, the result will be weakened ties to the West and further repression. The end result will not be progress on human rights, arms control, or trade. Anyone familiar with recent Chinese history can attest that the most brutal and protracted periods of repression took place precisely when China turned inward, against the world.

Recent agreements by the Chinese to protect U.S. intellectual property rights, to abide by the Missile Technology Control

Regime Guidelines, to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by April, and to discuss our human rights concerns—after years of stonewalling—are the clear achievements of my Administration’s policy of comprehensive engagement.

We have the policy tools at hand to deal with our concerns effectively and with realistic chances for success. The Administration’s comprehensive policy of engagement on several separate fronts invites China’s leadership to act responsibly without leaving any doubts about the consequences of Chinese misdeeds. Our approach is one of targeting specific areas of concern with the appropriate policy instruments to produce the required results. H.R. 2212 would severely handicap U.S. business in China, penalizing American workers and eliminating jobs in this country. Conditional MFN status would severely damage the Western-oriented, modernizing elements in China, weaken Hong Kong, and strengthen opposition to democracy and economic reform.

We are making a difference in China by remaining engaged. Because the Congress has attached conditions to China’s MFN renewal that will jeopardize this policy, I am returning H.R. 2212 to the House of Representatives without my approval. Such action is needed to protect the economic and foreign policy interests of the United States.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
March 2, 1992.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Annual Report on Hazardous Materials Transportation

March 2, 1992

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the requirements of section 109(e) of the Hazardous Materials

Transportation Act (Public Law 96–633; 49 U.S.C. 1808(e)), I transmit herewith the Annual Report on Hazardous Materials

Mar. 2 / Administration of George Bush, 1992

Transportation for calendar year 1990.

March 2, 1992.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,

Statement on the Death of Albert Bel Fay

March 2, 1992

Barbara and I are greatly saddened by the death of Albert Bel Fay. Albert was a close personal friend, and we will miss him greatly.

He was a Texan through and through. He was a leader in building the Republican Party in Houston, starting in the early 1960's. Albert was a mentor who helped

guide me in my early years in Texas politics, when getting Republicans elected was next to impossible. His service to the Republican Party has been invaluable.

Barbara and I send our deepest condolences and offer our prayers to his three children.

Exchange With Reporters

March 3, 1992

The President. I just have a couple of brief statements here. But President Yeltsin, Boris Yeltsin of the Russian Federation, has accepted my invitation to pay a state visit to Washington, June 16th and 17th. I view this as an excellent opportunity to follow up on that historic February 1st meeting at Camp David. We're going to review progress on a wide range of issues including the ever-strengthening relationship between the two countries. We'll get into the nuclear and military questions and then the joint efforts in support of reform in Russia. It will give me yet another opportunity, this in a very formal visit, to pay my respects to Boris Yeltsin who is really doing a superb job there.

The other news, and I don't want to put too much on it, is I was very pleased that this morning at 8:30 a.m., the leading indicators came out and they rose substantially, or rose by .9 percent in January. And I think it's a little better than had been expected. So, it's nice to have some encouraging news. And then our advisers, economic advisers, are a little more optimistic on the housing front as well. So, there we are, and just wanted to get those announcements out.

Taxes

Q. Sir, do you feel that going along with taxes was the biggest mistake of your Presidency?

The President. Well, I don't know about the biggest, but yes, I—you see, I'm very disappointed with Congress. I thought this one compromise, and it was a compromise, would result in no more tax increases. I thought it would result in total control of domestic discretionary spending. And now we see Congress talking about raising taxes again. And some in Congress are talking about trying to break down the spending caps. And so, I'm disappointed. And given all of that, yes, a mistake.

Q. Is it a little late, Mr. President, to voice regret about this?

Q. Why the change of heart now? All through New Hampshire you defended the 1990 budget—

The President. Well, I explained why I did it. I don't know whether it was defending it.

Q. But Pat Buchanan kept saying all through New Hampshire, "Read my lips. Read my lips." And when you were campaigning up there you said, "I never signed